

# Department of Land and Natural Resources

## Sustainability Hotspot

1

### KEAKEALANIWAHINE HOUSE SITE

~Big Island of Hawaii~



Top to bottom: Historic photograph of Holualoa, the northeast interior corner of the Pahika enclosure, detailed map of Keakealaniwahine showing Pahika enclosure as area 3831.

Along the shores of Kailua-Kona on the Big Island are found perhaps the highest density of native Hawaiian sites in the island chain; evidence of a richly sophisticated culture. But this is a history that is quickly fading from memory, a victim of human efforts to tame a jagged shoreline and transform it into a manicured landscape.

In May, 1998, DLNR was offered a 16.4-acre parcel 2-3/4 miles south of Kailua-Kona through a land donation by a private owner. The parcel contains an historic complex of *heiau* (religious temples), stone walls, platforms and archaeological deposits. The most impressive of the 29 recorded sites on the parcel is a walled enclosure which was described in early historic accounts as the residence of Chiefess Keakealaniwahine, the highest ranking *alii* (royalty) of her generation in the Hawaii Island dynasty. As such, the high chiefess ruled Hawaii Island as the paramount *alii* four generations before Kamehameha the Great.

A second component of this hotspot is Keolonahihi State Historical Park, a 12-acre parcel located *makai* (seaward) of Alii Drive and the Keakealaniwahine site, acquired by the State in 1980 to preserve a complex of 16 historic sites. The Division of State Parks administers Keolonahihi State Historical Park, which includes:

- five *heiau* sites;
- a housesite;
- a pond and springs;
- other structural features.

Traditional histories associate the Keolonahihi and Keakealaniwahine complexes with at least five generations of the highest ranking *alii* of Hawaii Island. Presumably, the major sites found on these two parcels were once part of a single chiefly compound in Holualoa, one of seven chiefly centers known to have been used by the *alii* along the Kona coast.

Stone features on the two parcels have suffered from natural deterioration, intrusive vegetation, past cattle grazing, or unauthorized visitation by the public. Some areas are heavily overgrown and roots of large trees and other vegetation continue to disrupt the foundations of some wall segments and platforms. Portions of one parcel were disturbed by a bulldozer, and boulder road-fill covers some wall segments near Alii Drive; evidence that urban development in adjacent areas is occurring.

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Top to bottom: Hotspot Team members (l-r) Yent and McEldowney, team member Charles Nahele, team member Harry Yada, northeast quarter of the Pahika enclosure.

There are three major obstacles to sustaining the cultural and archaeological integrity of these two historic complexes:

- the continued deterioration of the sites due to natural and human factors;
- the absence of a comprehensive and ongoing program of site monitoring, stabilization, restoration and interpretation which would eliminate or reduce site deterioration;
- the development of adjacent lands by private land owners or for public works projects. These projects, if not planned appropriately, could have a visual impact on the historic sites and could make unauthorized access to the sites easier.

#### DLNR's Sustainability Team for this hotspot:

**Holly McEldowney, Historic Preservation, Oahu, 587-0008;**  
Charles Nahele, Conservation and Resources Enforcement;  
Harry Yada, Land Division;  
Martha Yent, State Parks;

is actively planning for the future preservation of this cultural treasure.

#### DLNR's Vision for the Future and How to Attain It

It has always been a goal of DLNR to preserve sites and features of cultural value to Hawaii's communities. The department's vision for the future of this site includes transfer of the 16.4-acre parcel containing the Keakealaniwahine House Site to the Division of State Parks. The 16.4-acre parcel and the current Keolonahihi State Historical Park would be merged and developed by State Parks as a single historical park which is consistent with its past use as one chiefly center.

A comprehensive plan would be developed and implemented to maintain, stabilize, restore and interpret the sites in the historical park. Facilities may be developed on sections of the 16.4-acre parcel that are free of historic features so the park can be opened to the public. Negotiations with neighboring landowners would be formalized to monitor unauthorized use and encroachment on the historic sites within the complex. And finally, DLNR would sponsor community curatorship groups to supplement park management and operations activities.

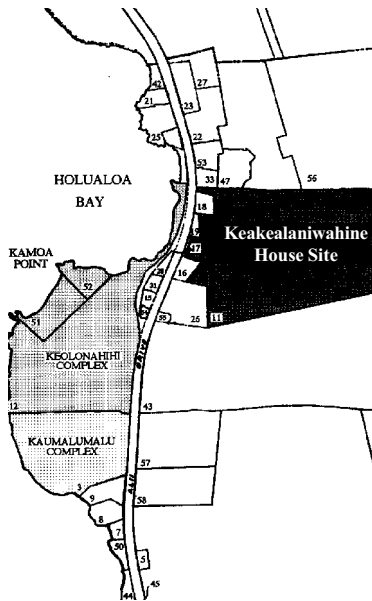
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Top: Area map showing pathway of Alii Drive separating Keakealaniwahine House Site from the Keolonahihi State Historical Park and the Kaumalumu Complex. Right: detail map showing complexity of the Keakealaniwahine House Site.

The budget to develop the historical park according to DLNR's vision comes to \$860,000. The operational budget in the first year will total nearly \$240,000 but will be significantly less in successive years due to initial start-up costs.

The successful management of the Keakealaniwahine House Site can serve as a model for other hotspots found throughout the islands with historic or cultural value like Kawainui Marsh and the Upper Waianae Valley on Oahu, as well as the Waialua fishponds on Molokai. 🌿

